

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 H-01 SY-05 SYE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 AID-05 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 /071 W
-----064091 211002Z /23

O R 210902Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9316
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4830

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, PINT, LE, SY
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE CONGRESSIONAL VISIT TO BEIRUT

REF: STATE 210474

1. AT THIS POINT, NATURALLY OUR PRIMARY CONCERN OVER THE
PROJECTED CONGRESSIONAL VISIT IS SECURITY. IN VIEW OF THE
DAILY FLOW OF MESSAGES FROM US ON THIS SUBJECT, WE LEAVE IT
TO NEA AND SY IN THE DEPARTMENT TO OUTLINE THE BASIC STATUS
OF THE SECURITY PROBLEM TO H. CERTAINLY FROM THE SECURITY
STANDPOINT WE WOULD ADVOCATE THAT SUCH A DELEGATION BE KEPT
AS SMALL AS POSSIBLE. WE WOULD NEED AN ENHANCED SY DETAIL
HERE ON TDY FOR THE VISIT.

2. RSO COMMENT: A VISIT TO BEIRUT BY ANY SIZED CODEL WILL BE
PERSONALLY DANGEROUS TO THEM. ALTHOUGH AN UNEASY CEASE-FIRE
HAS BEEN IN EFFECT SINCE AUGUST 9, AND ONLY BROKEN THE NIGHT
OF AUGUST 11/12, THERE CONTINUES SPORADIC SMALL ARM SNIPER
AND ROCKET FIRE IN A NUMBER OF AREAS OF EAST BEIRUT, INCLUDING
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THOSE THE CODEL WOULD BE LIKELY TO WANT TO VISIT. THERE CON-
TINUE TO BE REPORTS OF KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM BY ARMED BANDS
IN WEST BEIRUT, AND THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE IN EAST BEIRUT
HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY STRUCK BY SHRAPNEL AND MACHINEGUN FIRE
THIS SUMMER. THIS CEASE FIRE MAY BREAK DOWN AT ANY TIME,
BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE, WHICH WILL LEAVE THE CITY COMPLETELY
UNSAFE, WITH MOVEMENTS ABOUT IT SHARPLY RESTRICTED. IF THE

CODEL DOES VISIT BEIRUT, RSO RECOMMENDS NO MORE THAN SIX IN THE PARTY, INCLUDING CONGRESSMEN AND AIDES. RSO WILL REQUIRE FOUR ADDITIONAL SY AGENTS FOR THIS SIZE GROUP TO PROVIDE ARMED ESCORT SERVICES. THESE AGENTS MUST ARRIVE AT LEAST THREE DAYS BEFORE CODEL FOR AREA ORIENTATION. REGARDLESS OF NUMBER IN CODEL, OR NUMBER OF PROTECTIVE SECURITY AGENTS, THE PERSONAL SAFETY OF CODEL WILL REMAIN IN JEOPARDY DURING THEIR ENTIRE STAY IN BEIRUT. END RSO COMMENT.

3. CHARGE COMMENTS: SENATOR ABOUREZK IS QUITE CORRECT IN SAYING THAT A COMMITMENT TO A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF AID IS NOT SO IMPORTANT, BUT THAT A STRONG STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT IS. THE GOL IS NOT ECONOMICALLY BANKRUPT; WHAT DOES NEED TO BE PROPPED UP IS ITS MORALE. THE GOL WOULD WELCOME SUCH A VISIT. ITS LEADERS CONTINUE TO LOOK TO US TO COME UP WITH SOLUTIONS FOR THEIR DEBACLES, AS IN THE CASE OF THE ATTEMPT TO MOVE ARMY UNITS TO THE SOUTH, AND ARE CONTINUING TO PUBLICLY EXPRESS THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT WITH US ON THIS SCORE. THEY COULD BE EXPECTED TO INTERPRET THE VISIT AS A SIGNAL THAT THE USG IS CONTEMPLATING MAJOR NEW EFFORTS TO "SOLVE" THE BEIRUT SECURITY SITUATION OR THE PROBLEM OF THE SOUTH OR BOTH. PRIVATELY, MODERATE AND CHRISTIAN LEADERS CONTINUE TO URGE US TO TRY TO INTERVENE IN LEBANON'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. SUCH LEADERS WOULD ALSO WELCOME THE PROPOSED VISIT, SEEK TO PRESENT THEIR CASES TO THE DELEGATION, AND TRY TO EXPLOIT ANY CONTACTS THEY SUCCEEDED IN HAVING WITH IT AFTER-CONFIDENTIAL

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WARDS IN CHARACTERISTICALLY LEBANESE PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

4. FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF USG INTERESTS, THE VISIT WOULD AFFORD THE EMBASSY THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SURE THAT THE CODEL GETS A CANDID ON-THE-SPOT BRIEFING ON HOW THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS HAVE PROVOKED THE SYRIAN ARMY THIS SUMMER, CITING CHAPTER AND VERSE (NOT THAT WE WOULD DEPICT THE SYRIAN AS SAINTS). ON THE OTHER HAND, THE VISIT WOULD RAISE THE UNITED STATES PROFILE HERE EVEN MORE AND RAISE EXPECTATIONS THAT WE WILL SOLVE THE LEBANESE'S PROBLEMS FOR THEM, WITHOUT ACTUALLY MOVING US CLOSER TO A SOLUTION OF THOSE PROBLEMS. IT APPEARS TO BE ALMOST CERTAINLY BEYOND OUR POWER TO PREVENT MORE FIGHTING IN THE BEIRUT AREA IF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS ARE DETERMINED TO HAVE IT, AND NO SOLUTION FOR THE PROBLEM OF GETTING THE LEBANESE ARMY INTO THE SOUTH IS IN SIGHT. THE LEBANESE ARE LIKELY TO ATTRIBUTE TO A HIGH-LEVEL VISIT ANYTHING THAT OCCURS IN ITS WAKE. IN SHORT, THE VISIT ENTAILS RISKS FOR UNITED STATES INTERESTS WITHOUT A COMMENSURATE LIKELIHOOD OF PRODUCING TANGIBLE BENEFITS FOR LEBANON.

5. A CONGRESSIONAL VISIT WAS NOT A CONTINGENCY I DISCUSSED WITH THE AMBASSADOR BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE ON LEAVE. HE IS

EXPECTED TO BE IN ITALY UNTIL THE END OF THE MONTH AND THE
DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO SEEK HIS VIEWS THROUGH EMBASSY ROME.
KINSOLVING

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